YAM BREAKFAST

NOVEMBER 21, 1988

PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

CAN I PRAY IN THE SHOWER?

TOWARD A PRACTICAL SPIRITUALITY

Introduction - What a great title!

Why not?

Sure -- and then let's go home -

Although it has not occurred to me to try it: since surgery, shower has been difficult. I have enough trouble without worrying about praying...

The title suggest a problem - at least ambiguity.

The reference to shower represents an assumption about place -

i.e. are there appropriate places for praying ?

are the places where we couldn't/shouldn't pray.

Does it really raise the question of any kind of spirituality or spiritual exercise in the midst of our fast, busy, hurried, harried life -

But first - let's take a look at prayer and what we mean by it -

Let's acknowledge that we have trouble with it -

e.g. - studies show most people don't do it

much -

- -pastoral prayers in worship are tedious, long and boring - nap time -

- we are terrified to do it publically, as at Thanksgiving dinner - OK Jane, you just joined a church, why don't you say grace -

God is great, God is good

let us thank him for this food

or

My wife's brother's favorite:

Good bread Good ~~meant~~ meet

Good God, let's eat -

or better yet -

an offering by M. E. Mauth

titled a Facetious Thanksgiving Grace by Hennig Cohen and P. Tristan Coffin

"Yes ma'am, no ma'am - Thank you ma'am, please ; open up the turkey's butt and fork out the peas."

Actually - we only did it on special days -

My memory is dinner at Aunt and Uncle's and old Mr. Fuller who always prayed:

God is great, God is good

Let us thank him for this good

(rhyming it with good) and it never failed to set my brother and me to giggling and we still say - pass the food.

And of course there are those ritual

occasional prayers - ministers are invited to give -

banquet invocations mostly - which we ~~now~~ vow in ~~serving~~ seminary not to do because it is so theologically dishonest.

What does it mean, after all - to invite the preacher to open the PTA meeting, or the sports award banquet with a prayer?

-but after we've refused a time or two and tried to explain to the PTA second Vice President in charge of getting ministers to deliver invocations that

1) the PTA is a secular organization and doesn't need a minister

2) and that if it does, it is full of folk who could stand up and do it - and that clergy aren't and shouldn't be the only ones praying

3) what we don't say is that is this really worth my missing bedtime with my kids?...

After you try to explain and fail and endure withering looks of incredulity that you aren't delighted to be the community's professional prayer - a modern Shaman

You give up - do it and become adept at getting in and out -

The worst - or long banquets that take all evening and afford no exit -

My worst - The Lafayette Parade Prayer - 0 degrees, long wait - band started - flares - no prayer

Sports banquet - with 30% Jews and ~~ending~~ enduring the ugly anger of zealous evangelicals because I didn't say "in Jesus name."

On the other hand - recently

Chicago Yacht Club - Heart of America commissioning - boat, crew, Miss Illinois; Terra Museum - lunch with Mrs. Bush; American College of Surgeons - most distinguished surgeons in world -

It's part of task - don't mind and don't intend to belittle it - because it does indicate a need - or a sense that what we do has something to do with God or vice versa - & I'll get into that whenever I can and however I can.

It is the most visible expression of prayer and has absolutely nothing to do with personal, practical spirituality - as in praying in the shower.

What is Prayer -

Good question - and not easy or simple - Disciple ask ~~ever~~ once - teach us - and Jesus says "like this" gives a model - doesn't say - Pray this - but pray like this -

Our Father-	Intimate address
Hallowed	Adoration-affirm.of
Thy Kingdom come on earth	faith of weak--here & now

Give us bread	God as provider
Forgive us as we forgive	Closing the gap
Deliver us from evil	God as companion

No minister worth salt doesn't have a series on L.P. - (except me - mama told me not to - she was ~~fond~~ tired of sermons on L.P.s. I haven't)

But we do use it as model and over years there has been a classic pattern for public prayer.

-R.C./Epis. prayer is part of liturgy - written, prepared, gorgeous literature (Book of Common Prayer)

-Free Church disdain written prayer in name of ~~freed~~ freedom and then develops its own careful, unwritten liturgy... Listen to prayer of ~~Evangelists~~ evangelicals and you'll hear ~~seven phase~~ same phrases, week after week (it's why we write ours very carefully)

Classic pattern

Adoration

Confession

Thanksgiving

Intercession

Petition

Main problem is that we regard prayer as a ~~fair~~ form of literature - open to analysis and critique - by others or ourselves -

So - unconcsiously - we think first about how

this prayer ~~shounds~~ sounds

grammatically - vocabulary - theology - and so long as we think this way - we'll have trouble with whole notion of spirituality.

So let me define a couple of levels of prayer in the interest of putting us at ease:

1. Prayers of the church - been going on for 2,000 years - I get to add my voice for a while -the gorgeious liturgies - our best, aesthetically, theologically - the say what we want to say --they become ours - repetition has some merit

see BCW p46 Almighty God p12 Conf- p242 Funeral

2. Prayers as occasional requests and affirmations i.e. invocations and graces

3. Prayers as Honest Expressions of emotion that have no other way of getting expressed. the desparate cry of help - or ecstatic cry of pleasure and joy

4. Prayer as Conversation with God, free-flow, unstructured talking with God - no ~~answering~~ censoring - bringing it all to God - ask - argue - discuss

5. Prayer as asking for things you have a sense you might not get - like healing, safety, deliverence - because God is your Father/Mother - to whom you may

bring it all.

6 Prayer as Practicing the Presence of God

-this goes deeper

Prayer - as listening in solitude

-being useless in God's presence

an empty cup and asking God to fill

being a blank page and asking God to write -

7. Prayer as a channel through which God's love works

-

a powerful thing to know you are being prayed for

No, I don't believe it's automatic - so that if enough of us pray - for someone - God is going to be persuaded by numbers to act, ignoring the person no one prays for -

But if I do believe it is a channel in ways we don't comprehend.

Back to Title - Spirituality

A rediscovering: ~~not popular~~ way of being religious in our time.

Most of us weaned on social activist model... faith expressed in lives of faithful obedience, justice and compassion

with a minimum of piety and praying

and then we discovered that the great social activists were deeply, mystically spiritual - M. L. King, D. Bonhoeffer

R. M. Brown's new book explained relationship between social activist model and piety - in Spirituality and Liberation.

defines Spirituality as "a state of being, frequently approached through spiritual exercise and acts of discipline that put people in touch with realities or a Reality, not discernable in ordinary experience, and a deepening of a relationship with that Reality.

Western Christianity - says R.M.B. - has been distorted by The Great Fallacy

Greek philosophic contention that all reality can be divided into 2 realms -

spirit	-	body
holy	-	secular
sacred	-	profane
heaven	-	earth

That's not good Hebrew thought - or early Christian - but Hellenistic Christian - late Paul and after -

-The good life is separate from world

-Life in world is evil necessity

-Sex - evil necessity

-Spiritual life is apart from world

So truly, spiritual life is cloistered celibate, poor, isolated - i. e. Monastic and Prayer - best done apart from world - head bowed - eyes closed - hands folded

skewer - of course but Problem is that it profanes the rest of world - ethically - allows dualism - ala holocaust

the focal, action point of prayer is in your heart or soul - (what to do with rest of you is problem/so - bow, shut, fold)

That model is still with us - and it's why we don't know what prayer is and don't do it.

You can't be divided - you can't shut off everything while you pray -

Your stomach rumbles (what a lovely theological ~~connection~~ correction when someone's tummy growls during pastoral prayer!)

So - if only model you know is above - you're not going to be very successful (and certainly won't be praying in shower)

Toward a practical Spirituality

which tries to remember everything we know about praying and spirituality

i.e. a rythm of prayer - in world and apart from world - in worship and work - or closet and shower and on bus -

private and ~~community~~ communal

Toward Building a prayer life

Requirements ~~(one)~~ (mine)

1. The regular practice of solitude

Key elements

a Spiritual friend/guide/director

-a listener (no one listens)

on solitude -

a difficult matter -

our life style is a conspiracy against it

we are afraid of silence -

- city noise
- electronic noise - TV, Radio - cite guilt of sail boat, drive us crazy

we are afraid of aloneness -

cite Hoovers impressive of open-door offices -

Our result is we never know ourselves well -

some solitude is necessary (for your own health -

take a walk

meditate

shut down.

eat meal alone

run/swim - be by yourself

my contention is you can't be alone for long w/o. praying

2.) Be aware that prayer involves all of you - you can't be subdivided - there is no soul in you which is not connected

- ~~so~~ ancient religions focus on breath - as part of spiritual exercise
- so do modern stress management methods -

Can lower heart pulse ~~rate~~ by regular, disciplined breath -

- theologically - Greek / Hebrew

Ruach - wind, breath, spirit -

Pneuma " " "

God breathes into Adam - and it happens

~~How~~ God's spirit is breath -

When we breathe in - we are inhaling God's spirit.

Let's experiment - close eyes: sit straight feel body against chair, breath - in + out - fill lungs - be aware of exp. + cont. - feel your back + bottom press w/ each breath -

- now think about the breath being God's spirit + you inhaling it.

- sustain for one minute -

if your mind wanders -

on exhale - "L. J. C., have mercy on me -

- grant me your peace -

open hands -

3 Journaling - spiritual journal your thoughts -

ancient discipline

Annie Dillard - Pilgrim at Tinker Creek

- I did it in Psalms this summer -

4. Get used to not censoring — don't filter it!

and ask — ask for whatever — don't ask if it's appropriate — just ask —

5. use books of prayers — old + new

6. Pray alone — — L'Prayer
Jesus Prayer

7. → But join your prayers w/ others

— what a moment in worship — when we join our voices w/ 1500 others + beyond to countless millions —

D Conclusion —

We live in God's presence

— there are times for formal prayer / communal

+ ~~these~~ there are many more times to ~~celebrate~~ be in communion — in relationship w/ God

- silent awe wonder
- quick gratitude for beauty
- a cry of help — or need —

all day long — shows? — You bet!